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ABSTRACT

The major goals of this postdoctoral study were preparation in psycholinguistics, and training and experience in the field of reading, as well as a review and updating of competence in learning and child development. The first semester was spent at the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.Y., working on a project designed tc test the hypothesis that children will have more difficulty understanding sentences in which certain words are used in relatively less frequent grammatical functions, as compared with sentences in which these wcrds appear in their more frequent grammatical usages. The second semester was spent at Harvard Graduate School of Educatien attending courses and seminars in reading, methods of teaching reading, psycholinguistics, and attention in children's learning. The fellowship resulted in direct gains in scholarly wcrk accomplished and insights gained from exposure to new and different approaches and alsc provided involvement in a world devoted to a high level of scholarship and research. [Not available in hardcopy due tc marginal legibility of the original document.] (MBM)

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THE POSTDOCTORAL PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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My application for a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Educational Research had several bases. My graduate training was in the field of experimental psychology --- learning and child development. Shortly after I received my degree, my interests shifted to problems of education, especially instruction. Due to this shift in my main research focus, I felt the need for systematic training in new areas which were basic to my new interests.

Sparked by the work of Eleanor J. Gibson at Cornell University, I have become especially interested in the field of reading. Until the termination of the project several years ago, I was involved with Project Literacy. My participation in this research, in addition to curriculum conferences and collaboration with the Cornell group, especially Harry Levin, have greatly influenced my my recent research.

While I had had a good foundation in psychological and experimental design, I had never had systematic training in the field of psycholinguistics. Moreover, although I had done extensive reading in the area, I had never had training in reading, per se from a broad educational point of view. Therefore the major goals of my postdoctoral year were preparation in psycholinguistics; and, training and experience in the field of reading. In addition, I desired to review and update my competence in the areas in which I had been trained, i.e., learning and child development.

My tenure as a Postdoctoral Fellow extended from July 1, 1969 to June 30, 1970. The first semester was spent at the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, where I worked with Dr. John B. Carroll. My association with Dr. Carroll was extremely valuable. At ETS, I concentrated primarily on a study of children's comprehension of words having multiple grammatical function. (The project was designed to test the hypothesis that children will have more difficulty understanding sentences in which certain words are used in relatively less frequent grammatical functions, as compared with sentences in which these words appear in their more frequent grammatical usages. The study, funded by the U. S. Office of Education with Dr. Carroll as Principal Investigator, was a developmental one, using pupils in grades three, six, and nine, and also relating the major variables to verbal ability, sex, and socio-economic status.) This work was an effective introduction to a different area of investigation and also to research techniques that were new to me.

The second semester of my fellowship year was spent at Harvard Graduate School of Education, where Dr. Jeanne Chall was my sponsor. After consultation with Dr. Chall, I decided that while I was at Harvard, I could best utilize my time by attending classes and lectures. Consequently, I enrolled as special auditor in several courses. During the semester I attended and participated regularly in

1) a graduate seminar in reading (Dr. Jeanne Chall)
2) a graduate level course in methods of teaching reading (Dr. Esther Halpern)
3) a lecture course in psycholinguistics (Dr. Eric Wanner)
4) a graduate seminar in attention and children's learning (Dr. Sheldon White).

Three of these courses were academic in nature; all of them were most valuable in providing direction for individual study and a focus for my thinking. The course in methods of teaching reading given by Dr. Halpern was clinical in nature. The diagnosis and treatment of reading disabilities was examined using a case study method. Throughout the term I tutored a thirteen-year-old boy whose reading problems were centered in the visual and auditory areas. At the end of the semester he had indeed made progress, an outcome which gratified me greatly. My own understanding of the nature of reading disabilities and the teaching techniques devised to overcome some of the common disabilities was significantly enhanced. In addition, a close study of the child I was tutoring furnished an amazingly rich source of material for future research.

Among the other classes I attended were several sessions of a seminar in psycholinguistics given by Dr. Wayne O'Neil, three meetings of the proseminar in psychology taught by Dr. Nancy Waugh in verbal learning, etc. I also visited universities outside the Boston area, including Cornell and Columbia, to talk with researchers working in areas relevant to my interests. In addition, I gave talks at Harvard and at Boston University.

During this year, I also served as Program Chairman for Division C of the American Educational Research Association; it was the freedom afforded by the Fellowship from my regular teaching and committee assignments that enabled me to undertake this extensive job.

At the end of the semester, I returned to my home

university, where I have spent the summer writing and planning new research projects. While most of this period was not part of my postdoctoral tenure, I mention these activities because they are direct outcomes of the fellowship. While completing the analyses and writing for publication two projects which were begun before I started my fellowship year, I have been reading extensively in the areas of attention, meaningful verbal learning, and reading comprehension. I plan to extend work I have already done on the effects of utilization of different sensory modalities on learning to incorporate some of the questions raised in these areas. In addition, I have completed an outline of a book on reading. I have discussed this with a publisher and plan to begin writing during the coming semester.

I would be more than satisfied with my year if the only outcomes were those that I have already reported --- that is, the direct results of a large amount of time spent in scholarly work, the help acquired from access to other researchers, the insights gained from exposure to new and/or different approaches, and so forth. But other, intangible gains are perhaps even more important in the long run, and my year was extraordinarily valuable to me in these ways. It is difficult, if not impossible, to describe these gains in a report of this nature. I hope it will suffice to say that the fellowship gave me the opportunity to shape my environment so that I was part of a world that was dedicated primarily to scholarship and research and which operated at an extremely high level of competence and style. I enjoyed it tremendously; my enthusiasm and energy level were at a peak. Moreover, I have seen from a different vantage point the situation of the college student in today's world, and the understandings I achieved will, I know, be a strong influence in my work with my own students.

The most general, the most intangible, outcome of all was the development of an awareness that, indeed, I had been devoting my efforts in the right direction. That is, my basic motivation to teach at the university level and to do research in educational psychology were reaffirmed. Perhaps all of this amounts only to the fact that I needed very, very much the "shot in the arm" that the fellowship gave me.

It is certainly true that proper evaluation of the outcomes from this year of study cannot be made immediately after that year is completed. I hope --- and I fully expect --- that after a year or two, when

the work I have done is examined, the evaluation of my fellowship year will be positive.